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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010

Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara - Turkey Media Reaction - January 26, 2010 as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

Haiti: "Pain Not Easing At All" (Radikal)
Media outlets express continuing concern about the humanitarian crisis in Haiti and highlight the international conference held in Montreal to discuss Haiti's economic reconstruction. Mainstream Sabah's headline reads, "Death Toll in Haiti Exceeds Toll in Hiroshima," and says "the estimated death toll in Haiti of 450,000 is worse than Hiroshima which was 200,000." NTV alerts its audience that "as efforts to save more lives continue in Haiti, the country needs one million tents before the rainy season starts." Meanwhile mainstream Milliyet online writes, "Haiti Aid Conference Starts in Canada," noting "major donor nations, along with regional and multilateral organizations, opened a meeting in Montreal on rebuilding efforts for earthquake-ravaged Haiti." Liberal Radikal in "Search Ends, Time to Rescue!" highlights that "the British aid and relief organization Oxfam said the attending countries at the Montreal conference agreed to cancel Haiti's \$890 million international debt in the wake of the devastating earthquake."

Columnist Sami Kohen writing in mainstream Milliyet observes a deep contrast between Haiti and its neighbor Dominican Republic. He believes that "the Western world has a major role in this poverty" and suggests that the "social and economic poverty in Haiti is more obvious after the earthquake disaster. When comparing it to neighboring Dominican Republic, it just breaks one's heart to see the deep contrast despite Haiti's economic resources." Kohen concludes that "when French colonial rule ended in Haiti there were huge debts to pay which forced the country to become dependent on US banks. Along with the US invasion between 1915-1934, Haiti always became a sufferer economically and socially." Finally, Kohen says that the "debate in Western media, particularly French and American, is a considerable sign of efforts for cleaning up their conscience."

Newspaper Bloggers:

In its print and online version, Hurriyet carries a statement from

Guido Bertolaso, Italian Prime Ministry Undersecretary for Civilian Defense who accused the US for "setting up a media show" by using its aid to Haiti. Reacting to this story, several bloggers give their input:

Cemil Algan: "There was a debate about US aid to Haiti in CNN but the nature of talks centered on how it will negatively affect American taxpayers. The visuals carried more footage on American soldiers than shots from devastating earthquake."

Tulay Bilgin: "It comes as no surprise because wherever the US enters to a country under pretexts, like 'to bring freedom' there comes bloodshed. The US is more concerned about using a country's natural resources than helping out suffering people."

Selim Saglam: "This is a stupid statement. The US started the aid with 2 billion dollars and sent thousands of people out there. At the same time China was sending only 5 million dollars. Although some call big devil, in reality, it was the devil(!) which sent its aircraft carriers to help people. Have Italians, Iranians and Europeans done anything? None."

In the Headlines

First Science Envoy of the US: "Invest in the Youth"
Leyla Tavsanoğlu of leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet did an interview with Ahmad Zewail, White House Science Envoy reported in today's paper. The interview carries excerpts from Zewail's biography and highlights his Nobel-winning study on molecular chemistry. The following points are emphasized in the interview: "Dr. Zewail talks

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about President Obama's interest in strong cooperation on science and technology with other countries. The better the cooperation in this field is, the more development will be achieved. Advising Turkey to invest in its youth, Dr. Zewail points to vision and determination as key to success. He also believes that science can be a good tool to solve problems."

Basbug: In Democracies, Power Changes Hands through Elections
Media outlets report the Chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS), General Ilker Basbug, addressing a seminar on Monday, responded to allegations about a military takeover plan dubbed "Balyoz" (Sledgehammer) which allegedly included a bomb attack against a mosque in Istanbul. "How can the military think of throwing a bomb at the house of God? This is remorseless," said Basbug. Daily Taraf recently reported plans, such as military plans to bomb mosques, to provoke an uprising which would create a suitable environment for the army to take over the country's administration. Basbug noted the military felt uneasy about the allegations, and stressed the military's commitment to democracy and the rule of law, adding that "in democracies, power changes hands through elections." The top general acknowledged that Turkey had experienced some military interventions since the 1960s, and said: "Those days are left behind. We think that everyone has taken his own lessons from this process." Basbug also said on the issue of the "leakage" of some top-secret documents from the military, that nine officers had been taken to military court, one officer was found guilty and sentenced to three years, and ten officers of different ranks were arrested.

An Olive-Branch for the Taliban (Milliyet)
All papers today give extensive coverage to the fourth trilateral summit held between the presidents of Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Istanbul. Mainstream Hurriyet says, at the press conference following the trilateral summit, Afghan President Karzai said "those Taliban members who are not part of Al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups are welcome to come back to their country after laying down weapons, and enjoy privileges, rights and guarantees given by the Afghan constitution." Mainstream Milliyet covers the same news under the headline "An Olive-Branch for Taliban" and says that security and education issues were on the top of the trilateral summit's agenda. Milliyet and Islamist-oriented Zaman report that, at the joint press conference, President Gul said "It is not possible to overcome the problems facing Afghanistan through military instruments only. We believe efforts are needed to win the

hearts and minds of the Afghan people." Zaman reports that, when asked whether Turkey could hold talks with the Taliban, President Gul said "isolating the supporters of terror and dividing them into small groups is important to combat terror. We are ready to make any contributions if it is possible for Turkey to help within the framework of this perspective."

In a related story, mainstream Sabah cites the British The Times interview with General Petraeus at the Tampa Headquarters, and says that General Petraeus confessed that ending the insurgency in Afghanistan will be more difficult and will take longer time than Iraq. "It is necessary to be open for dialog with Taliban and Pakistani officials," Petraeus added according to the Times. Meanwhile, NATO forces Commander in Afghanistan, General Mc Chrystal told the Financial Times that "there had been enough fighting. As happens in every war, a political solution is unavoidable in the war in Afghanistan as well."

Ambassador Reddaway: Turkey Plays a Leading Role in Afghanistan (Hurriyet)

In an op-ed written for Hurriyet daily on the occasion of the Afghanistan conference held in Istanbul, British Ambassador David Reddaway, a former special envoy to Afghanistan, stressed that Turkey played a "critical and leading role" in Afghanistan. "The people of Afghanistan need our help; they deserve our help," said Reddaway, and added Turkey, having deep and long-standing ties with Afghanistan, could do a lot in this regard. He stressed that the

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"Afghanistan conferences" to be held this month in Istanbul and London would give the Afghan people a strong message of international determination on supporting their future. Reddaway underscored that terror, which has grown out of the instability prevailing along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, has harmed other countries including Britain. "We are determined to continue our presence in Afghanistan until Afghanistan is safe and Afghan forces are ready to fully take over security. We hope that day will come soon," emphasized Reddaway.

Diyanet to be Given 'Undersecretariat' Status

Papers report the status of the Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet) will be elevated to that of an "Undersecretariat" comprising of six general directorates. A desk for Alevis will also be set up under the Undersecretariat, and Diyanet will launch a radio and a television station. The Diyanet chief will serve in office for five years, for maximum two terms, according to reports.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi will pay an official visit to Turkey as the guest of Foreign Minister Davutoglu.

Jurgen Klute, a member of the European Parliament, expressed support for the workers of Turkey's former state-run tobacco and alcoholic beverages company Tekel in their strike in Ankara.

The scaffold constructed as part of various renovation projects at Istanbul's Hagia Sophia over the past 17 years has now been removed.

Turkish Statistics Institute say Turkey's population has increased to 72.5 million at the end of 2009.

Credit card spending in Turkey for 2009 totals 205 billion lira.

An Ethiopian Airlines plane with 90 people on board has crashed into the Mediterranean Sea shortly after taking off from Beirut.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, "Chemical Ali," has been executed by hanging on Monday. Majid was sentenced to death for ordering the gassing of Kurds in the northeastern town of Halabja, killing an estimated 5,000 people.

Four car bombs targeting hotels killed 36 people in Baghdad.

The Guardian reports Turkish Cypriots say Cyprus could split like Czechoslovakia.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said several Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank would always remain part of Israel.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has rejected as "irresponsible" allegations that swine flu is a fake pandemic.

JEFFREY